

## Private Internet sales

A private Internet sale involves a person offering to sell a product, good, or service to another person on a website.

The website acts as an intermediary between the two people. It is similar to purchasing a product or service through classified ads in a newspaper.

In most private sales, products are sold as is. Unless the sale involves a written contract, a private seller has no additional legal responsibilities for the item. Check with the seller to see if it is still covered by a manufacturer's warranty.

The Bureau of Consumer Protection does not regulate these transactions. But consumers do have the right to take private action to settle disputes with the other party, including small claims court.

### How to identify a scam

Red flags that could signal a potential scam are:

- If the inquiry is from someone far away, specifically in a different country.

- Refusal by the seller to meet face-to-face before completing the transaction.
- If the seller requests payment be sent in the form of a cashier's check, money order, or escrow service.
- If the seller asks for the money to be sent through a wire service, such as Western Union, MoneyGram, or Green Dot, or asks for a cash payment.
- If the seller pays you more than originally agreed upon, and requests that the difference be returned after you cash or deposit the payment.

### Do your research

A good way to make sure the product you are buying is legitimate and priced appropriately is to do some research. Make sure the product or service you are prepared to buy actually exists and is reasonably priced. Read the fine print of the product's description so you know exactly what you are buying.

A simple amount of research can give you a good idea if the product or the seller is suspicious. Review consumer posts on the Internet to see if other consumers have encountered problems with a seller, or if the seller is offering similar products or services under a different name.

Also, read and know the website's terms of use to see if it charges any fees or offers any protections. Keep a copy of the product description and any e-mails you receive from the auction site, or the seller, so you have a record of the transaction.

### Stay safe

If you are meeting with a seller or buyer, meet in a public place, especially if the product you are selling or purchasing is of high value. Many police stations allow private transactions to be conducted in their lobby. Contact your local police station for more information. Do not invite someone to deliver your purchase to your residence. Make sure a friend or family member knows where you are going or consider having someone go with you. Finally,

trust your instincts. If you think something seems too good to be true, it probably is.

## **Suggested tip**

Read our “Wiring Money” fact sheet before getting involved in private internet sales.

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

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